

## **IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **February 2019**

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) update provides a summary of significant activities of State Water Board from January 15, 2019 to February 15, 2019; and, the North Coast, San Francisco Bay, Central Coast, Los Angeles, Colorado River Basin, Santa Ana and San Diego Water Boards' from December 15, 2018 to February 15, 2019. Next month's report will present activities of the Central Valley Water Board's Program and cover the time period from January 15, 2019 to March 15, 2019.

### **STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD**

State Water Board staff attended the ILRP Roundtable hosted by the San Diego Regional Quality Control Board on January 15-16, 2019 in San Diego. Discussion centered on the current challenges relating to program implementation and status of current program projects.

On January 29, 2019, staff attended the California Bioresources Economy Summit. Discussions focused on outlets for organic materials including recovery and gas and energy production. Additional discussions included impacts of regulatory certainty in building the economy and options for technology.

On January 30, 2019, staff attended the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE) meeting in Sacramento. A member of the Building Industry Association presented on water issues and creating an optimal outcome for communities, ecosystems, and agriculture.

On February 4, 2019, staff attended the Farm Food Safety Conservation Network Steering Committee conference call. The Committee discussed finding new members that would add breadth to discussions. The Committee also examined the consequences in adding chlorine into irrigation systems and how to best co-manage irrigation practices overall.

On February 7, 2019, staff attended the Central Valley Regional Water Board meeting to support the proposed adoption of irrigated agricultural orders updated to include the precedential components of the Eastern San Joaquin Order adopted by the State Water Board a year prior. All of the orders were adopted by the Central Valley Regional Water Board. Comments provided by the public focused on the effort to comply with the requirements in the orders, but were generally pleased with the outreach efforts conducted by staff.

On February 12, 2019, staff attended the Institutional Design for Nutrient Management meeting in Davis. The purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion regarding PCA/CCA nutrient management certification.

## REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS

**North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board** staff are currently developing an administrative vineyard and orchard discharge draft permit and plan to get input from an existing Stakeholder Advisory Group once the draft is ready for review. Staff will provide an update to the Regional Water Board in February 2019 on the program scope and progress towards developing the draft order.

The Regional Board's Executive Officer issued a California Water Code 13267 Order requesting technical information from lily bulb growers in the Smith River Plain. The information will be used to develop a draft water quality management plan that will be further refined through a stakeholder process. Staff toured lily bulb farms in January 2019 to discuss the 13267 Order and finalize monitoring locations and landowner access for upcoming sampling. The Environmental Law Foundation, the Institute for Fisheries Resources, and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA) have filed a petition asking the Regional Water Board to develop a permit mechanism to regulate discharges of waste associated with lily bulb cultivation. Regional Board staff have conversed the petitioners to clarify their concerns and the petitioners have asked the State Water Board to put the petition into abeyance. The petitioners were pleased with the ongoing progress being made to address water quality issues. The EO agreed to develop a timeline by the end of 2019 to develop a permit for discharges from lily bulb operations based on the elements from the Smith River Plain Water Quality Management Plan. Regional Board staff are continuing to work with growers, agencies, and the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation on the draft management plan. Staff will provide an update to the Regional Water Board at the February 2019 Board meeting.

**San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board** staff continue to concentrate on the roll-out of the Region's Vineyard General Permit. Focus has been on outreach, enrollment, reconciling land parcel information in GeoTracker, and annual reporting. Work is currently being done with the Napa County Farm Bureau and other local agricultural organizations to implement a group monitoring program to satisfy the monitoring requirements of the General Permit.

Additional Vineyard Program information can be found at:

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/board\\_info/agendas/2018/August/41ssr.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/board_info/agendas/2018/August/41ssr.pdf) and

[https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water\\_issues/programs/agriculture/vineyard/index.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/agriculture/vineyard/index.html)

**Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board** staff sent a comment letter on December 11, 2018 to the Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group (VCAILG) on their Source Investigation Work Plan (SIWP). The SIWP is an element of the Water Quality management Plan (WQMP) process required by the Conditional Waiver. Under the Conditional Waiver, discharger groups must prepare a WQMP to address exceedances of Water Quality Benchmarks at discharger group monitoring sites.

VCAILG submitted a revised SIWP on January 3, 2019 based on the Los Angeles Water Board comments. In January 2019, the Los Angeles Water Board staff reviewed and concluded that the revised SIWP meets the Conditional Waiver requirements. On December 14, 2018 VCAILG submitted their Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and WQMP in compliance with Order No. R4-2016-0143. On January 9, 2019, the Los Angeles Water Board noticed the WQMP for public comment. No comments were submitted during the comment period, which had a final date of February 6, 2019. The Los Angeles Water Boards staff is currently reviewing the WQMP.

In January 2019, staff reviewed and approved one education credit request for a class offered by the discharger group in Los Angeles County, the Nursery Growers Association-Los Angeles County Irrigated Lands Group (NGA-LAILG). On May 17, 2018, the Los Angeles Water Board sent notices to enroll in the Conditional Waiver to 187 growers in Los Angeles County. As of February 2019, 9 of these growers enrolled in the Conditional Waiver, 29 were determined to be exempt, 5 growers did not receive the notice, and staff is following up with further enforcement action for the remaining growers. In February 2019, staff performed inspections of three nurseries located in Los Angeles County as a follow up to the notices to enroll that were sent in May 2018.

In January 2019, staff attended the ILRP roundtable organized by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board in San Diego and discussed variety of issues and challenges that the Regional Boards meet in implementing the program.

**Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board** staff conducted field inspections of agricultural lands in the Imperial Valley on January 9, 2019. Regional Water Board staff are continuing with enforcement activities on agricultural land that our records show have not obtained coverage under the Imperial Valley Conditional Waiver.

Regional Water Board staff are continuing with the development process of a General Order of Waste Discharge Requirements to replace the Conditional Waiver for the Palo Verde area. The Waiver for the Palo Verde area expired in September 2017. Staff are continuing the process for Board adoption, and plan to hold a public workshop in Blythe on March 7, 2019, and take the order to the Regional Board for action in Palm Desert on April 11, 2019.

On January 23, 2019, Executive Officer Paula Rasmussen and Regional Water Board staff met with representatives from the Palo Verde Irrigation District and Palo Verde Outfall Coalition in Palm Desert to discuss elements of the draft General Order.

On February 7, 2019, Executive Officer Paula Rasmussen and Regional Water Board staff met again with representatives from the Palo Verde Irrigation District and Palo Verde Outfall Coalition in Blythe to discuss elements of the draft General Order.

On February 5, 2019, Regional Water Board staff conducted a field trip to Imperial Valley to inform statewide Non-Point Source Roundtable participants of some of the

activities cooperating agencies are undertaking to address non-point sources of pollution. Executive Officer Paula Rasmussen also participated. Staff traveled to the Alamo River Treatment Wetlands and met up with Steve Charlton from Imperial Irrigation District, and Leon Lesicka, from Desert Wildlife Unlimited. Steve and Leon discussed the workings of the wetlands. Afterwards, staff traveled to farmed fields near Westmorland where they met with Al Kalin, a local farmer, who represents farming interests in Water Board activities and Rachel Mago, Imperial County Farm Bureau representative, to demonstrate farming practices that improve water quality, and share their point of view of non-point source issues in Imperial Valley.

Regional Water Board staff are continuing with the development process of a General Order of Waste Discharge Requirements to replace the Conditional Waiver for the Bard Unit of Reservation Division. The Waiver for the Bard Unit expired in January 2018. Staff are planning to bring the General Order before the Regional Board for consideration of adoption in mid-2019.

**San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board** staff continue to prioritize efforts on enrollment, which involves taking enforcement actions on growers who have failed to enroll in an agricultural order and growers failing to pay annual fees. There are two Orders in the San Diego Region for agricultural operations. However, with only one exception, growers chose to enroll in Order No. R9-2016-0004, General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Commercial Agricultural Operations for Dischargers that are Members of a Third-Party Group in the San Diego Region. In December 2018 and January 2019, staff issued four Notices of Violations to growers for failing to pay annual fees. Those actions resulted in either the grower complying or submitting a Notice of Termination.

Staff also conducted four inspections in the Fallbrook and Escondido area of San Diego County to evaluate compliance with the Order, focusing on their management practices for preventing discharges of waste. Staff is coordinating with the County of San Diego regarding one agricultural operation to ensure corrective actions are taken to address immediate and long-term threats to water quality from the operation.

Program staff successfully obtained an agreement between the four approved Third-Party Groups to share monitoring of 13 bioassessment stations. Following a meeting facilitated by Program staff in November 2018, each of the four Third-Party Groups submitted addenda to their monitoring plans that collectively meet the requirements in the Order to conduct bioassessment monitoring at all 13 stations. As a result, Executive Officer David Gibson approved all four Groups' monitoring plans. Each of the four Groups are preparing to implement their monitoring plans to capture runoff generated in the current rainy season.